

## **Dating Game**

I had been single for a while, and I was sick and tired of it. Being 32 and single is no laughing matter; the traumatic experiences of watching your friends get married, have children, and attain the American dream are akin to the hopeless depression of the schizophrenic mental patient. I wanted a wife, I wanted kids, I wanted a steady job. I was tired of working at Burger King and living alone in a studio apartment, and I was almost certain I memorized ninety percent of pornstars on the internet by name. Disgusted by the company of my left hand, I decided to go out to one of those speed dating events.

I picked out my best garb and walked out the door. Keep in mind, I worked at Burger King, so the best clothes I could afford were some mediocre dress shirts and tattered khaki pants I bought at WalMart during a clearance event. I walked into the event, trying to display the shred of confidence I had left. I was instantly discouraged when I saw all the other competing males and their Armani suits, high class whiskey in hand, and auras reeking of nothing but pure self esteem and conceit. The ladies there were dressed in fine dresses, some of them quite low cut, and smelled like a flower garden designed by Martha Stuart herself. There were some serious lookers in there, and I swear my pants shrunk a couple sizes at the sight of some of these dresses.

The speed dating started. The first girl I sat down with was quite young; a 22 year old mother of three. She had made a lot of mistakes in her life, and seemed far more than I could handle. Right off the bat she told me about how she was four days sober from methamphetamine and was looking to settle down with a nice man who didn't look like a walrus. I spent the next four minutes making general small talk, quite literally fearing for my life. Once that buzzer sounded, I rocketed out of my chair with the speed of a gazelle. The young woman seemed offended. But, honestly, what did she expect?

The next woman was way too old for me. I had thought that these events were age regulated and had different meetings for people

in different stages of life. I'm no pervert, but the whole idea of taking her shirt off and seeing two runny eggs nailed to the wall did not appease me. My decision was finalized as soon as she brought up her grandkids; I can hardly handle one generation of young ones, much less two. I actually asked her if she needed help getting out of her chair after the buzzer sounded... Again, another dark look. I was batting 0 for 2, but such pitches were ones that I would gladly let the catcher have.

The next woman seemed much more appealing. She was 26 and studying to be a nurse at a local hospital. She loved kids but had none of her own, which was a relief to me. She seemed well kept and stable, and wasn't a bad looker either. No lie, my eyes did wander a bit south a couple times during the meeting. She either didn't notice or didn't care, as she never pointed it out. I asked her if she'd like my number as the session ended, and she consented. I flipped open my phone and entered her number as she read it out. Smiling at her and thanking her for her listening ear (no wonder I had been single for so long...) , I got up to the next table. While doing so, I closed my phone by accident and realized that I never saved her number, so it was lost forever. For the love of... 0 for 3.

The next table was empty. What a joke. If I wanted to sit and stare at a wall, I would have stayed home. Nothing really to say here. Moving on.

This is where the story begins getting dark. The woman I met at the next table was the most interesting of all, but not in a bad way. She had long, flowing dark hair and green eyes. She had this cute smile and man, what a tight body on this one. Black dress, black shoes, black everything. For someone dressed in such a gothic manner, she had such a bubbly personality. Everything I said made her giggle, and I felt like a king just talking to this girl. She was 27 and currently unemployed. She was married to a husband before, but he had left her after their two children died of leukemia. She told me that the cancer was entwined with her lineage, dating back as far as the eighteenth century; therefore, in numerous fits of emotional rage, her ex husband blamed her

for giving the children cancer and left. Too pained by the loss of her entire family, she moved to the city a few weeks ago and was living on unemployment, unable to continue working at her job due to the crippling depression and panic she suffered as a result of her abandonment.

Despite the torment in her life, she never seemed depressed about it. Either she was incredibly optimistic about life or she was one of the best actors I had ever seen; either way, I was willing to take a shot. I asked her if she'd like my number. It turned out that she had some bad meetings at this particular convention herself, and wanted to take off to do something more fun. She tossed me an invite and, seeing as I was a lonely 32 year old man, she didn't have to ask twice.

I never understood what she saw in me over all the other guys. I was beaten and broken with no aspirations to better my current situation. Maybe she understood how I felt, considering all the pain she felt herself, and decided to get to know who I really was under this cocoon of emotionless insecurity. I sensed a thread of compassion intertwined between all that stress and trauma, willing to lend an ear to anyone that felt the same pain as her. I was truly transfixed by her presence, drawn to her character. I had never felt like this before.

We decided to go to a pool hall. Apparently she used to be a regular at another pool hall by her old house, winning local tournaments and making a name for herself, and she wanted to check out the scenery here. I wasn't too shabby at the table game myself, so I was excited. Every shot she made was perfect; the balls just sank into the pockets like each pocket was a black hole just waiting for something to trespass into its field. Out of the seventeen games we played, I think I made around 23 shots. She just kept running the table. It was funny, because she kept apologizing for being so good. I waived the apology and complimented her on her skill, causing her to giggle more. Every time she laughed, I fell harder and harder. And, to be honest, I was always excited when the cue ball landed on my side of the table. You know, 'cause she bent over to take her shots, as many

pros do. Heh.

We left after that. She said she had to get home as she had some errands to run, being new in the neighborhood and all. I agreed, since I had a facebook application that I had to update (obviously I didn't give her that reason. Jesus, what the hell is wrong with me? Passing up an amazing girl for facebook? Egh...), so we exchanged numbers and parted ways. I couldn't believe it, I had actually scored a beautiful woman. Hell yeah.

Weeks and months passed on. We continued to talk and eventually began regularly dating. The relationship moved pretty quickly and it seemed we were truly matched for each other. After about seven months of dating, I asked her to marry me. I popped the question on the seventeenth, as that's how many games we played on our first date. She found that so romantic and flew into my arms, screaming yes to the skies. Things were finally looking up.

I moved out of my shitbox apartment and into her home. I always admired the cozy feel of her two bedroom ranch house. Something perfect to start a family in. As I was moving my final things in, I noticed how much of a mess I was making, with my boxes of stuff and all. I apologized and motioned to the basement to finish moving my things. Her face instantly darted to mine. In a hurried and almost frantic voice, she assured me that she'd take care of the rest of my things and that I should relax. It was a bit odd, sure, but she had been through so much excruciating sadness throughout her life that her having a psychiatric illness is something I expected. I complied to her request.

The next few months were great. We never got tired of each other, and, on our wedding day, the kiss we shared on that alter was so special that I firmly believe angels surrounded us and serenaded us with harps and trumpets as our lips connected and sparked so brightly that the entire room was illuminated. I'll leave out the details of the honeymoon as this is not a pornographic piece. She was always leery of me approaching the unforbidding basement, sometimes to the point of arguing with me about it,

but, aside from that, I didn't see any fault in her.

Until everything I knew about life was shattered.

One day, she told me she was going to the grocery store. I noted that I wanted some ground beef in order to make hamburgers for dinner. She smiled at me with that cute, adorable smile I have grown to know and love and headed out. After climbing Burger King's corporate ladder, I had finally attained the position of regional financial manager for the entire state. I was working on some budget information, assessing the costs of all the franchises across the state. It was a long and arduous process, but I was getting just above six figures for it, so I wasn't complaining. After each report was fully completed and evaluated, I moved the files to a USB drive so I could upload them to a computer for a corporate meeting the next day. To my horror, with only three reports left to finish, the computer crashed. If I didn't finish these reports, I would surely lose my job.

I called my wife, asking her if she had another computer or something I could use, but she didn't answer. I rummaged through the house to find something to finish these reports with to no avail. Desperate times called for desperate measures, so I took the daring risk of approaching the basement. The handle was unusually cold and the door was locked. Frustrated and defeated, I slumped to the couch in a depression. That is, until I realized that there was a specific flower pot that my wife always guarded with her life. On a hunch, I went to it and found the key at the bottom of the pot, under the dirt.

As soon as I opened the door, a rancid and tangible odor attacked me like a falling wall from a decrepit building. The entire basement looked as if it was wasting away; a clear contrast to the rest of the house. The heavy layers of dust upon every surface suggested that the basement hadn't been accessed in years. Using my cell phone as a flashlight, I guided myself down the stairs and flicked a light switch. Surprisingly, the bulb still worked.

The walls looked molded, the wood was breaking down, the

stench was putrid, and the entire place was in disarray. I encountered a strong sense of dysphoria after setting foot in the room, so I quickly searched for some old computer with the intent of running upstairs as quickly as possible. To my luck and astonishment, there was an old laptop and charger in the corner, hidden under some boxes and books. Oddly enough, one of the boxes was one in which she brought down after I had first moved in. I had not seen some of this stuff in a long time... Ignoring the nostalgia, I seized the computer and charger and raced up to the master bedroom.

After giving the laptop a few minutes of power, I booted it up. It ran on windows XP and was quite the technological dinosaur compared to modern equipment, but it had Microsoft Office so it was acceptable. As soon as windows finished booting up, a system message appeared on the screen notifying me that new sources had been added to the tagged video cache, and if I'd like to check it. I had never seen a system message like this before. I know that snooping is generally taboo, but curiosity overcame me.

I was taken to a hidden file that required a password to access it. Rolling my eyes, I moved my cursor to X out of the program when suddenly, something typed the password in for me. A bit frightened at this point, I was sucked into the screen. There were four videos, entitled HIM.avi, ONE.avi, TWO.avi, and WHY.avi. All four thumbnails were pure black. Curious, I clicked on the file entitled HIM.avi. I should have never done that.

The video was extremely shaky and grainy. I could barely make out the figure of a man tied to a chair with some sort of a metallic rope. A woman, moving as if she was floating on air, not moving a single bone in her body but yet being able to slowly hover around the room, came into the picture. To my horror, she brought out a knife and started slowly cutting the man. The man screamed in brutal pain as the woman slowly cut him to pieces. Blood poured from his mouth and all his lacerations as the woman dug the knife in deeper. His clothing was slowly stripped from his body and, after each article was removed, she used a lighter to set all of the

newly exposed hairs on fire. Covered in horrific burns and terrifying cuts, the man had stopped screaming and was now simply bawling. He occasionally screamed out, "WHY?!", for that was all he could muster. Each time he did, the woman stabbed him again. She began laughing as the man began vomiting blood and entrails. She picked up the small solid pieces of the vomit with the knife and slowly licked the knife clean, giggling like a schoolgirl. She then proceeded to gouge the man's left eye out while he was still alive. I couldn't watch anymore, so I closed the video.

Shaken and horrified, I clicked on ONE.avi. I had to know what was going on. This time, it was a young boy, about eight years old, bound into the chair. He looked confused and innocent. I shook my head and fell into tears. Such a thing was not about to befall this boy...

This video was of the same quality as the last one; however, the background was much brighter. They seemed to be in an abandoned household, falling apart and in ruin. The woman floated over to the boy, much like she did in the last video, and kissed him gently on the cheek. She slowly brought heat lamps (the source of the brightness mentioned before) over to the boy, one by one, until the entire video was white. After a while, the camera was dimmed so that the boy could be seen again. The innocent look once seen in the beginning of the video turned into one of excruciating pain. The heat lamps slowly began burning his clothes and skin. Bubbles and blisters began rapidly forming on his skin as he too screamed in pain. As with the man in the last video, he screamed "WHY?", and was punished each time by being brutally lashed with a belt studded with pieces of what appeared to be broken glass. The blisters began to boil as the child was roasted alive. Eventually the screaming stopped and the boy fell into seizures. At this point, the same giggling in the last video could be heard again, this time even louder. She then took a knife and carved "I DESERVED THIS" into the child's melting torso as he screamed. Eventually, the boy stopped moving. I closed out at that point.

I needed to see the next one. I had to witness this. This had to be stopped. With such a determination, I clicked on TWO.avi. This time, there was no one strapped to the chair; instead, an infant car seat was in the chair with what seemed to be a newborn infant tightly strapped inside. Like the previous videos, a woman floated over to the child. She rubbed its head and briefly went off camera. She came back with a syringe and violently stuck it into the child's body, injecting a blue liquid into the child. Unique to the collection, the video began fast forwarding. At first, the infant seemed normal, happy, smiling, and carefree.

As the fast forwarding progressed, the child grew more and more uncomfortable. It started coughing and wheezing. It began puking up a white liquid and began crying, almost as if it too was saying "WHY?!". A dark bottle was briefly placed in front of the camera, and the words TASTY JUICE were written upon it. The bottle was turned over to reveal its contents; a blue liquid that sizzled when it reached the ground. Bloodcurdling screams erupted from the baby as it fell into more of an unstable condition. As the shrieking child grew closer to death, the same giggling in the previous videos presented itself, but, this time, it was far louder than before. Determined to make it to the end, I fixated my eyes upon the screen despite how much they were tugging at me to look away. The woman was screaming in laughter louder than the baby was at this point. She floated over to the child again, unstrapped it, grabbed it by the legs, and, to my utter shock, swung it head first as hard as she could at the wall. The child's head exploded upon impact, leaving cranial viscera and fluids draped all over the wall. The video then went black.

Shaking, I forced myself to click on WHY.avi. Before the video played, I noticed that this file was modified within the last hour. Almost blinded by fear, I swallowed my apprehension and opened my eyes. This time, there was just the woman. No other person was present. She was facing away from the camera and was speaking in a demonic tone. I can't recall exactly, but here's a paraphrased transcript of what she said.

"Hello. Clearly by now you know that I'm not the person you

thought I was. I'm a sick and twisted woman. I love this. It makes me so happy to see somebody die, especially at my hand. I know you're watching this, and I know you're terrified. The ghosts of those I have killed are swarming around you right now, telling you to pull away from the screen, to save yourself. Yet you still sit there and watch, waiting for some happy ending or reasonable explanation as to the events you have just witnessed. There are no special effects here; what you saw was real. I love watching this footage, even so much as to pleasure myself to it, but I had to hide it. You couldn't know. Your lonely piece of shit brain would tell you to turn me in. You were so desperate for love... You fell in love with a serial killer."

The woman turned around instantly and I recognized the face of my wife. I couldn't even feel emotion at this point. I didn't know what to think. My memory had fallen to pieces. I didn't know where I was, or who I had been, or what I was about to go through. Everything in my life died as I saw the once happy and bubbly eyes that I once saw in my wife become vapid and emotionless. A smile crept across her face, one that makes me quiver in malaise upon the slightest thought of it. This wasn't possession. This wasn't mental illness. This was just... Evil. So evil. The video continued.

"It's quite a shame. I really loved you. We had this passion. Hehehe. Remember the giggle? I made you fall in love with me. I tricked you. I lied to you. And, wanna know the best part? I knew you would find out. I couldn't keep the secret forever. Eventually you'd find the key to the basement, eventually the stench would become too strong, eventually the decaying foundation would begin to topple the house, and eventually you'd finally realize that my children never had leukemia and that my husband never left... I killed them. And, they're closer than you think. Why do you think the basement smells so bad? You'd be surprised how easy it is to cement human remains into the floor. You stepped on my dead children and husband. Feel proud of yourself?"

"I..."

"I know you're watching this. I just made this video. I know what you've done."

I began shaking my head, fearing what I knew I was about to hear. A cold sweat crept upon me as I suddenly felt two eyes bore into the back of my head. I was paralyzed.

"Those noises you're hearing aren't the pipes. Turn around."

I slowly turned and froze as I met the psychotic eyes of my wife. She began to giggle.

I don't know what happened after that. I've been told by the police that people heard screams coming from my house during my attempted murder and called the police. I was told by physicians that I was violated with the sharp end of a screwdriver and that she placed a block of hot ice on my lap. I was tied to a chair, the same one as was used in previous videos, and was videotaped. All the videos are now in police custody, and I refuse to see mine.

My wife was given the death penalty. I was present at the execution. Her last words were to tell me that she would never leave me, that she would always know where I was, that she would never give up on my murder, and that she never left a job unfinished. She was sure to tell me that I would see her again, that she'd send another minion to finish the job. She finished by telling me that I would never be safe.

Ever.

She survived the first three attempts at lethal injection, but died on the fourth. She was smiling, and she giggled like a little schoolgirl right before she died.

I have been through extensive therapy, and, years later, I have been able to overcome the horrific trauma I saw and experienced. I still make six figures a year, I have made a good network of friends, and my life has been incredible. I feel accomplished and

successful, something I never felt before. I am now confident. So confident, in fact, that I am going on a date tonight with a girl. She's cute too, with this long, dark, flowing hair and vibrant green eyes.